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THIS MINISTRY.

A SERMON

PREACHED AT THE OPENING

OF THE

SYNOD OF NEW JERSEY,

IN THE SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ELIZABETHTOWN,

October 15th, 1850.

BY SYMMES C. HENRY,

MODERATOR OF THE PRECEDING YEAR.

Princeton, N. J.:

PRINTED BY JOHN T. ROBINSON.

1850.

REVEREND

FATHERS AND BRETHREN,

OF THE SYNOD OF NEW JERSEY,

PERMIT ME TO INSCRIBE TO YOU, WITH

SENTIMENTS OF FRATERNAL ESTEEM,

THIS SERMON, WHICH WAS PREACHED IN ACCORDANCE WITH A STANDING USAGE OF OUR BODY;

HUMBLY AND FERVENTLY PRAYING, THAT WE MAY HAVE GRACE FOR THE FULLFILMENT OF OUR MINISTRY; AND THAT WE MAY ALWAYS BE FOUND STRIVING TOGETHER WITH ONE MIND FOR THE FAITH AND FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL.

S. C. HENRY.

Cranbury, October 22, 1850.

SERMON.

2 Corinthians iv. 1.

THEREFORE SEEING WE HAVE THIS MINISTRY, AS WE HAVE RECEIVED MERCY, WE FAINT NOT.

These words present us with a theme from which we may gather instructions, that I trust will be appropriate and profitable for this occasion. The importance of the Christian ministry, to the temporal and eternal interests of man, was well understood by him in whom were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and hence in the exercise of a compassion as boundless as his wisdom, it pleased him while on earth to provide for the future necessities of his church, by setting apart a particular order of men, whose business it should be to negociate between God and their fellow-sinners on the momentous concerns of salvation. Indeed, the wisdom of the appointment is so manifest to reason, that it may well be supposed on this, as well as scriptural grounds, that such a class of men will never be wanting to the Christian Church. Whatever therefore, pertains to the ministry—to an office of perpetual and Divine appointment, must be interesting, not only to those who hold it, but to the far greater class of those whom it was designed to benefit. Nothing that regards the souls of men, can fail to interest alike both ministers and people.

From these words, I shall take occasion to say a

few things of *the General Nature and Validity of this Ministry—its Difficulties—and its Encouragements.*

1. *The General Nature and Validity of this Ministry.*

As the Apostles were specially chosen to testify the resurrection of Christ as eye-witnesses; to reveal his will infallibly; and to confirm it by miraculous powers, it seems quite obvious, that *their office* was *an extraordinary one*, and therefore, that it expired at their death. Whatever then, may be said as to *the successorship*, of such an office, we are free to say, that we acknowledge no claims to the distinction, as they have been put forth by a certain class of modern dignitaries. But though the design of the Apostolic commission has been accomplished, and the office from the very nature of the case has expired, the Great Head of the Church among his ascension gifts "gave *pastors* and *teachers* for the work of the ministry." Here, then, is the office designated in the text. It is an office instituted by the Lord Jesus, as a standing ordinance, and the highest in grade, since the Apostolic age, in the Christian Church.

The appointment of the Christian ministry is one of the very greatest blessings to mankind. Ever since the first revelation to this lost world, God has had some to make known his will, and to urge its high and holy claims to regard. This is a point of too much consequence, not to command attention. It was so in the Patriarchal ages, both before and after the flood, and perhaps to an extent, and with a clearness far beyond what is generally supposed. It was so pre-eminently under the Jewish dispensation, when, besides Prophets, who were raised up to perform

special services, *one whole Tribe*, composing if not the twelfth, still a very large proportion of the people, was devoted to the work of the sanctuary, which included the office of religious instruction. When the blessed Redeemer appeared on earth, it was in the character of a preacher of divine truth. Even then, he sent his disciples forth, and clothed them with authority to dispense the word of life. And after he arose from the dead he enlarged the ministerial commission, and commanded that the gospel should be preached to every creature; adding, "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world:" a promise which both puts a divine seal and sanction upon the ministry; and also declares its supreme importance in bringing about the salvation of our ruined race.

The simple fact therefore, that the ministry is an ordinance of *perpetual appointment* in the church, is no small proof of its high instrumentality in the work of reclaiming a lost world. But when we read that it was expressly designed "to turn men from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God; that it is by the foolishness of preaching that it pleases God to save them that believe, we cannot hesitate to give it the foremost place among the instrumentalities selected and employed by divine wisdom in bringing men to a saving acquaintance with the truth. To expect the gospel to spread and to take effect—to have free course and to be glorified, in becoming the power of God and the wisdom of God upon the souls of men, without the agency of those whom Christ has called to minister in his name, is not only irrational, but a most unhallowed presumption. And while we would

not limit the Holy One of Israel; while it is not to be denied that it would be easy for him to bring men to repentance and a holy life, apart from the ministry of the word, it is sufficient for us to know, that this is comparatively very infrequent, and therefore, in ordinary cases not to be looked for; and that it is the institution of his own sovereign wisdom, that he honours for this purpose pre-eminently and almost exclusively.

The great design contemplated in the Christian ministry, is what the apostle declared in his own case to be "*to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*" It is a ministry of sovereign love, and boundless compassion on the part of an offended God, in behalf of his offending and rebellious subjects. It regards man as fallen and helpless, and condemned. It supposes his condition wretched, but not hopeless. It looks upon him every where, at all times, and under all circumstances, as a sinner against God, "dead in trespasses and sins." If the minister of Jesus forget or overlook this great Bible truth, he mistakes his errand and all his labour and preaching will be ineffectual. Here then, is the key to all useful and availing effort on the part of the gospel ministry. It comes with the proclamations of pardon and peace—with the offers of a full and a free salvation to guilty and perishing sinners.

It is quite evident that such a ministry, is not *the Ministry of the Law*. The law has no voice but that of death and condemnation to the guilty sinner. It knows no mercy, and never speaks of pardon. It demands obedience, but it says, "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, written in the book of the Law, to do them." It never did, and never

can make the comer thereunto, perfect—its commandment is so exceeding broad, that it multiplies and aggravates transgression. The consciousness of its violation to a sinner, without the hope of mercy will only terrify him with the fear of punishment, and plunge him into a darker and a deeper despair. A principle not known to the law, and unknown to reason, must be applied to meet the exigency of man's condition. A message never thought of by man, must be brought —a message suited to him as a miserable sinner—a message of mercy from his offended Father in heaven —which can take away the guilt of sin from his conscience and subdue the power of sin in his heart. Such is the message which is the *Theme*, and the *Burden* of "this ministry." It proclaims a Saviour—such a Saviour as man wants. It is mercy meeting misery, and announcing pardon and peace. It says, God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, and that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." Let this message be effectually delivered by the Holy Spirit to the soul, and however deep the stains of sin upon it, the work of renovation and purity will be achieved.

We should not fail to notice that *this ministry*, of which the text speaks, is elsewhere very emphatically described as "*having been received*." This is indeed a solemn and a weighty consideration. Every true, faithful minister of the gospel, may say with the Apostle that he has "received his ministry of the Lord Jesus." "No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron." It is the prerogative of God both to call and qualify a man to be a successful preacher of his word. *All men are not*

thus called. Among the thousands who profess to be the followers of Christ, very few are employed in the work of the ministry. The question, as to what constitutes *a call to enter the sacred office*, may we think, be easily answered on scriptural grounds. It will at once be conceded, that *no unconverted man* is thus called. There must be the power, as well as the form of godliness, associated with this trust. True piety is essential in all who sustain the character of Christ's ministers. But not only must a man be a *Christian*, who aspires to the sacred office—there are several other qualifications, which the Great Head of the Church has required, in those who go forth to minister in his name. These are recorded in detail in the epistles to Timothy and Titus. There we find that aptness to teach—the ability to rightly divide the word of truth; soundness in the faith, and a good report of them that are without—by which, we may understand—an unblemished reputation, guarded and graced by Christian prudence—are so many requisites, which along with piety, go to make up that standard of qualification for this holy and responsible office, which the Lord Jesus Christ, who instituted it, has seen fit to prescribe. The sum of all is, that a minister must not only be a good man, but that he must have a good degree of knowledge and practical wisdom; that he must be competent to, and faithful in the discharge of the duties of his office, if he would make full proof of his ministry, and show himself a workman, that needeth not to be ashamed.

But neither is every good man and every man whose endowments are sufficient, allowed for these reasons to suppose that he has a call or a warrant to

preach the gospel. Before a man can be satisfied that he is so called, his heart must be excited and inclined to this office by holy considerations. He must be willing and desirous to undertake it, not from any selfish, or worldly motive, but from *the longing and irrepressible desire to glorify God, in the conversion and salvation of souls.*

In addition to the prerequisites already alluded to, a man before he can be entitled to perform the duties of this ministry, *must be duly authorized* for the high and sacred service, for no man has a right *to usurp the functions* of this holy office. After passing through the ordeal, which the particular branch of the church with which he is connected has established, to determine the qualifications of its candidates for the holy ministry, he must be inducted into it, in a regular and formal manner. Thus he becomes *officially* invested, as well as spiritually and scientifically furnished. He must be clothed with the garments of the priesthood, before he can wait at the altar.

The scriptural mode of doing this, is by the *imposition of hands*, and in our own beloved church, "by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery." We think it may fairly be presumed, that Jesus Christ appointed some form of introduction to office in his visible church, and as this was the only mode which obtained in apostolic times, the conclusion is very natural, that *it received the sanction of the Apostles*, and was observed by them, because they received it from their Divine Lord and Head, and were themselves thus formally consecrated to their work. It is not pretended that any particular or mysterious endowment is communicated on the one

hand, or received on the other, by the observance of this usage, but it is in accordance with Apostolic direction, and seems highly expedient and proper, inasmuch, as it serves as an impressive sign, to convey an idea of ministerial authority so conferred. In reply to those who here differ from us, and on this ground make *Exclusive Pretensions* to *the only Apostolic and Divinely Constituted Ministry*, we would barely remark, that Timothy, the very model of a bishop in their estimation, was so ordained, "*with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery.*" It is capable of the clearest proof, and has often been proved, over and over again, that these Presbyters were the Pastors of particular churches, exercising a parity of office, and claiming no precedence above their brethren, *that the very same Persons* are sometimes called *Bishops* or *Overseers*, as well as *Elders*, and *Pastors* and *Teachers*, names, merely expressive of diversified duties, while the *Office* in each case, is *identical*. Most conscientiously, then, do we repudiate the doctrine of *prelatical ordination* when it assumes to be *the only valid ordination* to this ministry, as an unscriptural and an unwarrantable assumption. No; we are fully persuaded in our own minds, that we are acting in accordance with the injunction of the Master, in *Presbyterially* setting apart *by prayer and the imposition of hands*, men baptized with the Holy Ghost, to the office of the ministry. Every minister, thus ordained, may magnify his office, and feel that he receives it in a succession, quite as Apostolic as though conferred by Pope or Diocesan Bishop. Let him exercise it in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ, from whom he received it, and the

Great Head of the church will in his case, as he has done for ages, affix the signet of his approbation to his labours.

II. Having spoken of the general nature and validity *of this ministry;*—Let us now, in the *Second Place*, advert to that *particular feature of the office*, to which the text points in no dubious terms. I mean *the Difficulties* attending the discharge of its various functions. "Seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, *we faint not*"—obviously intimating, that were it not, for *the Mercy afforded*, those who are called to exercise it, would faint, and feel overcome and overburdened by its duties, its trials and solemn responsibilities.

It would seem at first sight, quite natural to suppose, that no very great difficulties would grow out of the faithful performance of ministerial duties. And such a notion we are aware, is in accordance with the sentiments perhaps, of a majority of the people in our churches. They imagine that the office, when compared with other pursuits, is, *an easy one*; and it is undoubtedly true, that it may be divested of much that is calculated to depress and discourage in the case of an unfaithful and time-serving incumbent. But all the representations of scripture in regard to the Christian ministry, lead us to the conclusion, that in the fulfilment of its high and holy aims, there are obstacles to be met and to be overcome. Why on any other ground have we so many directions and encouragements to be faithful? Why so many prayers for those invested with it, that they might be strengthened for the work? Why did the Chief of the Apostles, in allusion to its important, and soul-

pressing behests, ask in anxious solicitude—"Who is sufficient for these things?" Nay, why, if this view of the office, be not the correct one, did the blessed Redeemer judge it expedient to cheer his ministers, and to comfort them by the promise of his sustaining presence alway—even to the end of the world?

What then, are some of the *Difficulties*, connected with this ministry, with which we are charged—that weigh at times almost with a fainting impression on our minds? We reply, they are such as concern both, *our Public and Private duties.* Such as arise, from *the very nature of the work itself; the imperfect manner in which it is performed;* and *the solemn responsibility it involves.*

There is the *Work itself.* It consists principally, in preaching the truth, and in so preaching it, as to realize the great design of the gospel,—"to save them that believe." The gospel, is the great remedy supplied by God, to heal the souls of men, diseased with the malady of sin; and the dispensing of this remedy is intrusted to his ministers. The treasure of its grace and mercy is committed to earthen vessels, and they are required "to declare the whole counsel of God;" to present all the truths of the Bible in their connection, and their due proportion. This then, is an arduous business. To be a Steward of divine mysteries, a Shepherd of the flock, to feed them with knowledge and spiritual understanding, is indeed no easy task. A minister of the gospel does not fulfil the end of his ministry, unless he endeavours, under divine grace, to bring every individual in his congregation to devote himself to the service of the redeeming Saviour. But in doing this, he has to address

himself to souls alienated from the life of God, with little sense of the value of his favour, and no delight in communing with him—souls that are indisposed to these enjoyments—that are carnally minded and destitute of that spiritual taste and apprehension, which is requisite for the due appreciation of these blessings; and like Ezekiel, he has to prophecy to dry bones in the valley of vision, which will never live, but under the visitation of that breath, which bloweth were it listeth.—It is not an easy thing under any circumstances to obtain an influence over the mind of another; but to obtain such an influence as to persuade it, contrary to its natural bias—is a work of the highest difficulty. Yet such is the work of a minister of the New Testament. He has to arrest the sinner in his course of sin; to shake down the strong holds of his security, and to carry the conviction to his heart, that he must be born again, before he can enter the kingdom of God. Nor does he find it less arduous to bring the formalist and the self-righteous to see and to acknowledge the utter deficiency of all that in which they trust. In all these cases the preacher of God's truth has to bring an unpleasant message; to persuade to what is disagreeable; and to effect not only an outward reformation of conduct, but to work a radical change of views and character. Did men naturally love God and holiness, this office would be comparatively easy. But how hard it is, to speak and to reason against the inclinations,—the prejudices,—the very nature of the human mind. Before men are made willing to bow to the claims of the gospel, how many difficulties must be overcome—what tastes implanted and habits

formed—what an entire change of the moral feelings must be effected. It surely can be no easy matter to prevail on them to pluck out a right eye, to cut off a right hand, and to induce them to exchange a world, which is seen and tasted and felt, for a world which is unseen, and all the enjoyments of which, are at variance with their prevailing desires. This indisposition to the things of God, so radical and incurable by human power, as it has always been a source of discouragement to the faithful minister, so it would prove an invincible obstacle to success, did that success depend on the might and the wisdom of man.

It has never been found an easy matter in discharging the duty of declaring the whole counsel of God, to keep up the continued interest of the great mass of those, who attend the ministrations of the sanctuary. The truths declared from the pulpit are those which they have been accustomed to hear from their childhood, and are divested of that *charm of novelty*, which attaches to *a new discovery of science*. The preacher of the gospel is restricted to the inspired record, and is not allowed to give it the variety of human invention. What is new, must on that very account be false and dangerous. All that can be delivered by the ablest men, has been revealed. Yet many who frequent our churches, seem anxious to hear something which was never heard before, and if this desire of novelty is not gratified, the message of mercy is slighted and undervalued. Such persons fail to remember, that it is the practical application of old and well known truths, which is chiefly wanted, and from which the attention of men should not be

diverted by speculations and theories, however ingenious or captivating.

And here we would also observe, that no small difficulty, arising from the discharge of this ministry, is to know how, *to apportion divine truth*, to the diversified circumstances of our hearers. Though as we have said, the truths and doctrines of the Bible are the same, and admit of no abridgment and addition, yet the character, and the situation of those to whom that truth is addressed are very various. The same doctrine, and form of elucidation, and mode of address, will not do for all classes and ages; for the different degrees of mental culture among our hearers; their different temperaments, and diversified experiences. It is not unfrequently, therefore, the occasion of anxious suspense in the mind of a good Steward of the mysteries of God, to know how rightly to divide the word of truth, so as to give to every one his portion in due season. Such was the prerogative of the Blessed Master. To him was given the tongue of the learned, and he knew how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. But his servants often fail here. They often know not what will exactly suit those who wait on their ministry; nor how at all times to bring forth things, new and old, from the inexhaustible treasury of truth, so as to administer the proper degree of support and consolation, and encouragement, and correction, and reproof, and warning, which particular cases require.

But after all,—the perplexities that embarrass the faithful minister in the prosecution of his more *public exercises*, are not to be compared to those which assail and oppress his spirit *when he looks within*. When he

undertakes an investigation of those motives and principles—those aims and ends, by which he should alone and always be actuated in his high and holy work. When he turns his eye upon the workings of his own heart,—there, alas! he meets with little that does not humble and discourage him; and he is made painfully sensible, of that lack of *personal religion*, without which, though he might speak with an angel's tongue, he would be but "as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." If he asks himself, where is the ardent love for Christ—the disinterested zeal for the promotion of his cause—the compassion for perishing sinners—the delight in going about like his divine Master, in doing good to the bodies and the souls of men? Where the purity of motive—the meekness, the humility—the heavenly-mindedness—the fervent piety which should characterize the faithful pastor, and the example of the flock?—these questions impress his mind with such a sense of his many imperfections and failures, that he is at times almost ready to despond, and he fears, lest after preaching to others, he himself should be "a cast away." It is true, indeed, that in some respects the ministerial office may be conducive to the cultivation of personal piety. It secures a man from those worldly influences arising from the pursuit of gain, that greatly estrange our mind from our higher and eternal interests. It necessarily occupies the mind with the contemplation of great and good and solemn subjects, and so affords leisure and opportunity to attend to the concerns of a future existence, which the cares and the business of time greatly preclude. But there is danger that it degenerate into a *mere professional pursuit.* There is danger lest we come

eventually to pray without feeling, and to preach without emotion—without the earnest desire of saving souls. To be perpetually engaged in going through the forms of religion, uttering its language and manifesting its spirit, while our hearts are but little impressed with the importance and sacredness of our duties—tends directly to formalize and secularize our entire religious character. The very thought, that while we are calling others into the kingdom, we may never enter ourselves—that while we are made the keepers of the vineyard of our mother's children, our own vineyard we have not kept, and that the work of godliness is far from advancing in our own hearts, is of itself a most painful and depressing reflection. And while such considerations as these lay heavy on the mind, it not unfrequently happens, that the difficulties of our position are aggravated by the abridgement of time, and the hurry and press of official engagements. New undertakings, and new and unexpected calls upon our time and strength, spring up from day to day—and, along with an advanced and improving order of things by which we become surrounded—higher expectations, and higher demands. And while these cases of emergency multiply, it often happens that but little opportunity to prepare for them is enjoyed; and the sources of weariness, and perplexity increase and dishearten us.

I cannot pass from the consideration of the various causes, which at times produce impressions of discouragement and trembling on our hearts, without adverting to *that sense of solemn responsibility*, which every minister should keep alive in his soul; never forgetting that he watches for souls, as one that must

give account. How great the guilt and how awful the doom of the unfaithful minister. To every minister, God says with equal truth and equal emphasis, as he said to the prophet, "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman, unto the House of Israel, therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood, will I require at *thine* hand." And is it so, my Brethren, that when we come to stand at the judgment seat of Christ, we must answer not only for our own souls, but for the souls committed to our charge, if we warn them not; then, never was there a work undertaken by mortals so solemn, or connected with such amazing consequences. Surely, there are times when we go in and out before the people of our respective charges, that we can enter into the spirit of the Apostle's declaration to the Corinthian church, when under a conscious burden of personal short-coming and responsibility, he assured them, that while he was with them, as a minister of Christ, it was, "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." Often when we go forward, in imagination, with our dying congregations to that day, and that tribunal, which will try every man's work—when we think what a hold our preaching and our example take on eternity—what issues are at stake beyond the grave—we cannot, surely, we cannot, forbear exclaiming,—is this work assigned to frail, imperfect, sinful man! Are earthen vessels the depositories of

such a treasure! Blessed Jesus, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

III. Having glanced at some of the difficulties attendant upon the faithful discharge of the duties of our high and holy office, let us now turn our minds to a brief survey of *those Encouragements and Supports* which are promised, and to a good extent have been experienced by thousands in the exercise of *this ministry.*

The implication which our text contains in regard to the arduous duties and discouragemeuts of the ministerial office is too plain to be called in question, and equally clear is the assumption, which it furnishes, that these difficulties and discouragements are overbalanced by the most ample supplies of grace and strength. "We faint not, because, *we have received mercy.*" And so the Apostle, in another place, declares that he "*obtained mercy* of the Lord to be faithful." Encouragement and support are needed—and blessed be God, it is in accordance with the recorded experience of his ministers, in all ages of the church, that they have not been withheld. While men of other pursuits, and other professions are often borne down to entire and hopeless despondency, so that they have been compelled to abandon their most cherished aims—the encouragements afforded the christian minister, have been strong enough to sustain him in every struggle, and to bear him above all opposing and disheartening influences. His encouragement comes from above—it comes from God—*from his mercy, promised*—and because *he is faithful,* who has promised. Numerous and diversified then, as

may be *the difficulties of this ministry,* we too, may exultingly exclaim, "Our Sufficiency is of God."

The work of the ministry puts on a cheering aspect to our minds, when we call to our remembrance, that *God has honoured it above* all other employments. It is by this instrumentality especially, that it pleases him to save those that believe, and to extend the interests of his kingdom in the world. Every faithful minister is associated with the holy angels, in carrying forward the purposes of redeeming grace towards their final and triumphant accomplishment. He is engaged in promoting a cause that secures the highest glory to God, and the greatest happiness to our wretched race. Nay, he is honoured, by being a co-worker with God, and as an Ambassador of Christ, he is employed in furthering the great designs of his redeeming mercy. No wonder, that an Apostle, in taking this view of his position, magnified his office, and was ready to move on to prison and to death, that he "might finish his course with joy and the ministry that he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." And surely, when we contemplate the ministerial character and office, as sustaining relations so sacred and sublime, we should try and lose sight of all minor and trivial causes of despondency, and faint-heartedness.

Need I remind you also, my Brethren, for our encouragement, amidst the toils and sacrifices of our profession, that our work has its *pleasures too*—pleasures that the world can neither know nor appreciate; I mean the pleasure "of saving a soul from death, and of hiding a multitude of sins." Could we estimate the value of the soul—could we weigh its worth, as it

is weighed by him who made it—could we lift the covering which God in mercy has thrown over the dark world of woe, and penetrate the veil which shuts out from our sight the glories of heaven,—then, to be instrumental in saving one such soul, would bring to our hearts, a purer, a holier, and a more transcendant joy, than the greatest achievement of earth and time. It was a joy like this that satisfied the Redeemer for the travail of his soul, and made him willing to endure the cross, and despise the shame. And is it too much to say that every faithful minister, in his measure, participates in these blessed sympathies of the Redeemer? And are not such joys, an ample indemnification for all the difficulties, and self-sacrificing labours, that are endured in winning souls to Christ? To preach then, so that those who hear us may believe, and turn to the Lord; to preach for the edification and comfort of "the household of faith;" to be guides and counsellors and ensamples to our respective flocks; to be spiritual fathers in Christ, and to see and hear that our spiritual children are walking in the truth, can there be any employment more exalted, more Christ-like, and soul-satisfying? If there be a delight in the contemplation of doing good—if the thought that we are instrumental in making others wise and holy and happy, can administer the purest pleasure to our minds, then, such is the pleasure of the faithful minister, who, in the spirit of his office, is engaged in making known the unsearchable riches of grace and salvation and glory, to those who are perishing in their ignorance and sin; and who is spending his life in endeavouring to bring all around

him to seek the good part and to embrace the choicest gifts of heaven.

We must not fail to remark in this connexion, that *the general assurance of success*, as the consequence and the reward of ministerial fidelity, seems to be plainly implied if not positively asserted; and is presented as a motive of encouragement to be faithful and unwearied in the work of the Lord. What precise measure of success a minister shall have, or how many truly converted souls he shall have, as the seals of his ministry, will never be known until the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed. But it seems quite in accordance with scripture and experience, to anticipate a measure of success in some degree proportioned to the amount of prayerful effort, and holy diligence and zeal enlisted in this good work. "Our labours shall not be in vain in the Lord." They will be crowned with a blessing, and we will be made instrumental in bringing some poor souls to the Saviour. I do not say that all truly faithful ministers of the gospel will be equally blessed in their preaching, any more than I would say that the same minister is alike successful at all times. But where a minister of Christ discharges the duties of his office in the spirit of his high commission, success, in a greater or less degree will be the result. He is, indeed, but an instrument in dispensing the riches of divine grace, "that the excellency of the power may be of God;" and yet the more earnestly and humbly and perseveringly, he applies himself to his appropriate duties, the larger the harvest of blessing in the conversion and salvation of souls, that will be reaped. God's word will not return void and fail to accomplish the thing, whereto it

is sent—when it comes from glowing lips, with all the spirit-stirring attributes of a holy and enlightened zeal—enforced by the example of an upright and prayerful life. The truth of God cannot be plainly and affectionately and solemnly declared without taking effect and producing fruit to some extent. Sinners in Zion will be made afraid, fearfulness will surprise the hypocrites, the impenitent will repent and believe, the word of the Lord will have free course and be glorified, and there will be added to the church many such as shall be saved.

But not only does the hope and the evidence of being made useful, if it be only in a very limited degree, serve as a rich equivalent for the various and arduous labours of "this ministry,"—there is also the promise of the *Master's presence* to his servants,—and they may trust in him for grace and strength equal to their day. While they are breaking the bread of life to others, he will not leave their own souls unfed and unnourished by the communications of his spirit. He will comfort them with those consolations wherewith they comfort others. He will be near them in every emergency to soften their fatigues, to sweeten their trials and to make all grace abound on their behalf, so as to carry them cheerfully through scenes, at the prospect of which, they were ready to tremble. In their desponding hours, he whispers to them, "Let not your hearts be troubled"—"my grace shall be sufficient for you"—"my strength shall sustain your weakness;" and "I will never leave thee." Surely it is a matter of encouragement for his ministers to call to mind that while he bids them, "Go preach the gospel," he adds, "Lo I am with you." What multi-

tudes of witnesses to the truth of this promise could be summoned from among the living and the dead. And are we not my brethren, of the number of those who can say that having obtained help from him in all our duties, and our trials, we continue even to this day, and are ready to testify of his power, his goodness, his faithfulness? Let us then gird up the loins of our minds for more assiduous and hopeful exertions in our proper and covenanted work, yielding neither to sloth nor despondency, but aiming and praying to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

And now, not to allude to any other considerations, which should serve to cheer and sustain the ministers of Christ, that they "faint not"—we must not forget, *the Recompence of Reward*—to which they are encouraged to look forward. Moses, that faithful minister of the typical economy had respect to this. He grasped it with a firm and steady faith, and contemplating it only in reversion, he renounced in exchange for it all the glories and grandeur of earthly greatness—an earthly sceptre, and an earthly crown. The scriptures establish the principle, and urge the motive of future rewards proportioned to the good we may be instrumental in accomplishing. "Those that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament—and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars, for ever and ever." Here then, is more than enough to outweigh all our sacrifices and sufferings and labours. "Be faithful unto death," says our divine Master, "and I will give thee a crown of life"—a crown resplendent with the unfading beauties of immortality, when the transitory glories of this world shall have withered like a fading flower, and all the pa-

geantry of human greatness shall have passed away as a dream. This is the crown that awaits all who have faithfully discharged "this ministry"—which they have received of the Lord Jesus. On that great day when he shall appear in his glory, to reward every one according to his works—he will not be ununmindful of what his servants, even the weakest of them, have done to promote his cause. As the Chief Shepherd he will then acknowledge and applaud them, before an assembled world. He will say to each of them, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord—because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee Ruler over many things." And then with his own hand will be confer upon them the *crown of glory*—a *crown of righteousness*—a *crown of rejoicing*—a crown decked with *the souls of their people*, whom they have converted or edified, who will then appear with them as their *joy* and their *crown*, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming. And O! with what exstacy, will they receive that crown, thus conferred. and with what high and everlasting exultation will they wear it! Yes, my Brethren, the smile and the approbation of the blessed Jesus, on that august occasion, will overpay all the labours, and trials of the longest life, and the most protracted and self-denying service. Therefore, "let us be steadfast—immoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord—forasmuch as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

And now, Fathers and Brethren, in view of the great and sacred importance of the ministry we have received, let us bear in mind the obligations, which

its various and solemn trusts impose upon us to be found diligently and faithfully discharging all its duties, to the utmost of our ability.

Let us take heed to our ministry, that we do not lose sight of its great object. And what is *that object?* Is it not, *to win souls to the best of masters?* It is for this purpose, that every faithful minister should live and labour. And we are under peculiar obligations to do this, not only, as we hope, that we have experienced the forgiving grace of God ourselves, but in virtue of our office. When we were clothed with the ministerial character, and undertook the pastoral charge, we solemnly recorded our vows before God, that we would with all fidelity and zeal engage in this good work. These vows of God are upon us. Let us then, beware, that we do not deal deceitfully with God, and bring upon ourselves the charge of unfaithfulness to the souls committed to our trust. However we may regard it, our divine Lord and Master, considers it as the greatest favour and honour, he could confer on us, to commit the interests of his cause to our hands, and consign to our care, those souls he died to save. Can any of us endure the thought of betraying that cause? When he will ask of us an account of our stewardship, which of us will not then wish to be found faithful? Will any of us then regret, that we have given ourselves wholly and unreservedly to his service, and that we had spent so little of our time, in the pursuit of secular ends, and the studies of a fashionable and captivating literature or the blandishments of social and polished life? Oh no; in that day, when the destinies of the soul and the glories of redemption, shall have the light of

eternity poured upon them—then, to have been an instrument, however feeble, of helping one poor sinner in fleeing from the wrath to come, will infinitely outweigh, in our estimation, every other achievement, however honourable and splendid it may have stood forth to the gaze of mortals, on the theatre of time.

The gospel which we preach, is indeed, the power of God—it is mighty to the pulling down of the strong holds of sin, in the hearts of men; and there are elements of potential influence in our ministry to bless and to save the world. Only let it be with us our first object to exercise this ministry for the glory of God, in the salvation of sinners. I need not tell you, how much it would detract from our usefulness, if we should connect other things with this, as favourite objects of pursuit. If for example we cherish an ambition for a name, or a taste for the literature of the world, or a fondness for wealth. But having chosen *our object, to preach Christ*; an object in point of excellence with which, the world has nothing to compare—*let us make full proof of it.* Let it command our time, and our talents. Let us devote to it our first thoughts, our warmest affections, our best labours. Let us remember, that it is the command of scripture in reference to the duties of this ministry, "Give thyself wholly to them." Is it not reasonable then, to believe that a more entire consecration of themselves to the work, and a more thorough imbuing of their souls with the spirit of the Lord Jesus would greatly augment the usefulness and power of the ministers of the Gospel? A man who enters it with undivided aim—seeking to serve God in the Gospel of His Son, will be happy. He will find it, his meat and drink;

and in proportion as he loves his work, we feel persuaded that his preaching will be *with power*—"the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." The powers of this world cannot vie with the efficiency of those weapons, which are wielded by the ministers of the gospel of the grace of God. Behold the Monk of Wittemberg shaking the papal authority to its centre. And at a later day, see Wesley soaring above the most dignified religious establishment in any land; and from such examples, learn the power of the devoted Gospel minister, who, without titles and rank and riches, can, and does put forth an influence to change the face of society, and to renovate the world.

Do we then desire, my Brethren, as I trust we all do, to be more exclusively devoted to our Great Mission? Is it our ambition and our hope to be made the honoured instruments of success, in our high vocation? the way to it is plain. It is, to *humble ourselves before God for past neglect;* and *to pray more importunately for the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

That we have great reason to deeply abase ourselves, upon every review we take of our ministerial course, I doubt not that you all feel and are ready to acknowledge. Many of us, I do not question, have so laboured and preached, as to commend our message to the consciences of our hearers. We have by all the blessed and touching considerations of divine truth, sought to awaken them from the slumbers and the danger of an impenitent state; we have set before them life and death, and have urged their return to God. Some of us may not have been wholly wanting in those duties which have led us to converse and to

pray with them in private, and at their own homes. And if in these respects we have approved ourselves in any degree faithful, it must be a source of comfort to our minds. But alas! how unfrequently and unsteadily have we performed these duties! Is it not painful to reflect, that some of our people, and with whom too, we conversed almost daily, may have perished through our neglect,—our indifference to their spiritual welfare—our unfaithfulness and backwardness in not warning them, and praying with them. Surely, we have need, my brethren, to pray that we may be humbled under a review of our official delinquencies, and instead of suffering ourselves to be elated by any of our performances, to seek that they may be more and more baptized with the "Baptism of repentance," and the blood and righteousness of our living and gracious Redeemer.

Let us then labour to gird ourselves with new decision and fresh enterprise for the duties of this ministry. Let us not feel satisfied and happy, unless we have good reason to believe that the work of the Lord is prospering in our hands, and that his word is glorified and has free course among the people of our several congregations. Far be it from us, to lay it as an "unction to our souls," that because God is a sovereign, in the dispensations of his mercy, and that he alone can give the increase to the ministrations of his servants, that, on that account, we should not feel anxious as to the result of our labours, or whether they were accompanied with any remarkable and cheering success. Let us preach and pray, as if the salvation of sinners depended on the fidelity and earnestness, with which we presented the claims of

the gospel message, and besought sinners to be reconciled to God. Above all, we should feel it incumbent upon us, especially in times so full of important occurrences, and so pregnant with great events, as the age of the world in which we live, to abound *in prayer*. God has constituted ministers of the gospel, the official intercessors of his church. The Lord Jesus, has thus clothed them with the similitude of his own character. All those ministers of the gospel, who have been distinguished for successful labours, have been men abounding in prayer; not merely remarkable for the fervour and the efficacy of their public addresses to the throne of grace; but also, for their regular and habitual private intercessions with God for a blessing on their labours, to further the salvation of men. Such believing and wrestling prayer, while it will in no wise retard us in our studies, but rather contribute to our own enrichment in the mysteries of the gospel—will, we are assured, turn out to the advantage of the souls for which we watch. Let us then cultivate the spirit of prayer—and as we are engaged in a work—which God alone can crown with a blessing—let us give him no rest, "until he establish—until he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Let our daily and fervent prayer be—"arise O Lord, and plead thy own cause—O Lord revive thy work—in the midst of the years make known—in wrath remember mercy."

My beloved Brethren in the Lord, our yearly convocations are generally occasions full of interest to us, as they afford us the opportunity of friendly greeting, and furnish us with seasons of Christian intercourse and mutual counsel and united prayer for the pros-

perity of Zion. And sometimes they are so associated with events of mournful and tender interest, as to bring up a crowd of impressive and not unprofitable recollections before our minds. We can never come together without missing some faces, with which we have long been familiar. If in our inward thought we ask, where are they? we at once receive the answer, in those interrogations, so full of solemn meaning—"The Fathers, where are they? and the Prophets, do they live forever?" Yes; ministers are dying men. Every year, it is said of this, and that minister, that his course is finished—his pastorate, at an end—and his flock, without a shepherd, or fed by a successor, who enters into his labours. We feel it to be the dictate of brotherly affection, to record with Christian hope and resignation their departure, and to pause that we might hearken to the wholesome admonition, "Be ye ready, also."

Since we were last convened as a Synod, it has pleased our heavenly Father, to remove from us, one of our number, venerable in age, and distinguished in station, and in usefulness. He was, indeed, a great man in our Israel. The most of us belonging to this Synod, were his pupils, and the very mention of his name awakens in our hearts emotions peculiarly pleasing and tender. When we hear the name of Samuel Miller, we think of him as a venerable Father—a beloved and honoured Instructor—the able and distinguished Advocate of the ecclesiastical polity and order of our church—and the Friend and the Patron of all its benevolent and religious institutions; a man, who put forth a more than ordinary influence on his generation, by his writings—his position, and

his various labours,—and has left the impress of his character, his talents, and his long and useful life, on the church and the world. Where is the man in our church, who held a higher place in the affections and esteem of those who knew him, and whose death was more sincerely, and extensively mourned?

The Intellectual character of our venerable Father was of a high order. The faculties of his mind were originally vigorous and active, and were highly improved by well directed and persevering study. There were few men of his day, whose acquisitions were more extensive or more solid. On all subjects to which he turned his attention, he formed clear and comprehensive views. His writings exhibit the riches of his mind in a smooth, flowing, perspicuous and natural diction, and not unfrequently rising to the elegant and ornate. On all questions of controversy, no man was more candid in his manner of reasoning. His opinions, after being formed with much scriptural and cautious examination, were maintained with manly decision and cogent argument. His preaching was always instructive, and often, in late years, deeply impressive and serious. In all his productions for the press, especially in his controversial writings, he was remarkable for patience and fairness in his investigations, for clear and forcible reasoning, and for correct statement and unusual despatch.

But when we turn our eyes to his Social and Religious character, we are struck with its completeness and symmetry. He not only had the various qualities of excellence, but he had them in just proportion, and beautiful consistency. It is not unfrequently the case, that we often find a character of many virtues,

marred by prominent faults. Some who possess a variety of estimable qualities, are irritable, self-complacent and vain. They are wanting in meekness, of a suspicious temper, and subject to rashness, fickleness, or indiscretion. But all who knew Doctor Miller, could not fail to perceive the gentleness and urbanity of his manners, his tenderness of the feelings of others, his Christian simplicity, his composure and self-possession in seasons of exciting debate, and his resolution and firmness and principle when duty called him to act.

These attributes of character made him admired and beloved by all around him, and greatly contributed to render him useful and respected in the high and important station he occupied so many years. Now, when we reflect upon it, we cannot but regard it as very important, that a character of such completeness was exemplified before so many hundred young men while they were training for the gospel ministry, and that in so many ways it was brought to bear upon the interests of our Seminary, and the interests of the Church.

But how our admiration increases as we contemplate his growing meetness for heaven, under the infirmities of declining age. Such was his spiritual-mindedness, and so entirely did he consider himself as having done with earth, that for months his departure was the pleasing topic of his daily conversation. So firm and peaceful was his reliance on the righteousness of the Redeemer, that death was divested of all its terror, and he spoke of it as going home to his father's house to be at rest forever. As he verged towards the closing scene, his sky was

serene and cloudless. With faltering and dying lips, he testified to the supporting presence of the Master, and calmly said, "not a doubt," as he breathed out his life. But I will not dwell here. You all know with what patriarchal faith and dignity he went down to the grave, and with what blessed hope he committed his soul to his covenant and redeeming God and Saviour.

While living, we all accorded to him many distinguished excellencies; but since his departure, we feel more than ever, that he was no ordinary man; and that his gifts and graces will long embalm his name, in the sweet and pious recollections of our Church—a Church, to which he devoted the unabated attachment and energies of a long life, and with the history of which, his life and labours are so closely identified, that the former cannot be written, without portraying the conspicuous and important part that was borne by the latter. The memory and the usefulness of such a man, will long survive. They cannot be forgotten and pass away with the transient eulogies of the funeral service, and the weekly journal. They are the legacy of the Church, and the Church will value and record them.

Reverend Fathers and Brethren, what impressive recollections crowd upon the minds of the older members of this body, at its returning sessions. Especially does the speaker go back in memory to the time, when he first had a seat on this floor. The lapse of another year will complete the third of a century since his name was enrolled as a member of the Synod of New York and New Jersey, of which this Synod was a constituent part. Comparatively, how few

before me, were then members of this body. The names of only nine of the Synod of eighteen hundred and eighteen, find a place on the roll of eighteen hundred and fifty. The worthy and venerable men, who at that time were most active in managing the concerns, and sustaining the interests of our Synodical Jurisdiction, have nearly all passed away. A few, only "remain until this present, while the rest have fallen asleep." Many faces, then seen at our annual gatherings, so familiar to a few of us, only, have long since been shrouded in the darkness of the tomb. How affecting the changes which two and thirty years have made in our body! How entirely certain that these changes will be as many, as striking, and to all of us more deeply momentous, in the two and thirty years to come. God grant, my Brethren, in this high and holy ministry, when each of us shall hear the Master sounding the retreat from our several fields of action, it may then appear, that we have not run in vain, nor laboured in vain.